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NEWS

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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For more information: NDDOT Communications 701-328-4559

Increased Enforcement on Texting while Driving during Distracted Driving Month

Throughout the month of April, law enforcement agencies in North Dakota will work together to enforce the texting while driving law. This effort is a part of the national *U Drive. U Text. U Pay.* high-visibility enforcement campaign that combines enforcement of North Dakota's anti-texting laws with advertising and media outreach to let people know about the enforcement and convince them to obey the law.

"Driving and texting is illegal and irresponsible. People who break our state's texting law will be stopped and fined. If you are texting, you are not driving," said Lt. Jeff Solemaas of the Bismarck Police Department. "For those who say that driving and texting is an epidemic, we believe enforcement of our state texting law is part of the cure."

Violating North Dakota's texting law, which has been in effect for nearly four years, can be costly—those caught texting and driving will be issued a \$100 fine.

In 2013, approximately 3,100 people were killed and an estimated 424,000 were injured in motor vehicle crashes involving distracted drivers nationwide.

According to the 2014 North Dakota Statewide Traffic Safety Survey conducted by the Upper Great Plains Transportation Institute, the number of drivers who admit to texting and driving has steadily increased since 2011. This increase is happening despite nearly 60 percent of drivers indicating they are "very uncomfortable" as a passenger when the driver is texting.

"Texting and driving requires motorists to take their eyes off the road, hands off the wheel, and mind away from driving. When you're a distracted driver, you risk not only your life, but the lives of others and no one has the right to put another person's life at risk like that," said Karin Mongeon, Safety Division Director for the North Dakota Department of Transportation.

The *Click It or Ticket* and *Drive Sober or Get Pulled Over* campaigns have proven that the combination of laws, targeted advertising, and high-visibility enforcement can help change people's driving behaviors. This strategy was expanded to include distracted driving in 2014 and North Dakota was one of the first states to participate, issuing 384 distracted driving citations.

For more information, please visit codefortheroad.com.

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